



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 229 West Towne Mall  
**Application Type:** Exterior Renovations to an Existing Building in a Planned Multi-Use Site  
**UDC is an Advisory Body**  
**Legistar File ID #:** [79616](#)  
**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Meredith J Evans, pb2 Architecture + engineering

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing to renovate the existing tenant space at West Towne Mall for a new indoor recreation use (Planet Fitness). Exterior building modifications include a new exterior entrance, increasing the height of the existing parapet wall and decorative pilasters framing the storefront, as well as amending the materials palette to include fiber cement board on the extended pilasters, incorporating additional stucco on the parapet wall, and recladding the existing pilasters in new masonry. The proposal also includes various site improvements, including landscape and bike parking.

**Approval Standards:** The UDC is an **advisory body** on this request. [Section 28.137\(2\)\(e\)](#) of the Zoning Code requires that a planned multi-use site containing more than forty thousand (40,000) square feet of floor area and where twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet of floor area is designed or intended for retail use or for hotel or motel use, shall require conditional use approval following a recommendation on the design of any specific proposal by the Urban Design Commission. The conditional use is currently under consideration as a possible administrative minor alteration. As such, the UDC is advisory to the Director of Planning (28.183(8), MGO).

In addition, pursuant to MGO [Section 33.24\(4\)\(f\)](#), *"Proposals for additions, exterior building alterations, or site alterations to existing structures currently used for, or originally designed to accommodate, a retail development that has a floor area of forty thousand (40,000) square feet or more shall be approved pursuant to the applicable ordinances relating to the alteration of approved projects and shall comply with these requirements to the extent possible, given the constraints of the existing sites and structures."* As part of their review, the UDC should refer to Section 33.24(4)(f), which includes design related requirements for customer entries, site design, parking design, pedestrian circulation, and central features and community spaces (attached for reference).

**Zoning Related Information:** The project site is zoned Regional Mixed Use (RMX). While the Zoning Code does include design standards for mixed-use and commercial zoning districts, they do not apply to this development since there is not a major expansion (50% or more of building floor area) occurring.

**Adopted Plans:** The project site is located within the Odana Road Plan (the Plan) planning area. Staff notes that while the [Odana Area Plan](#) recommends design-related considerations including avoiding blank street-facing walls and screening parking, many of the plans recommendations, including those related to building height and placement are limited given that the scope of work is limited to exterior renovations of the existing building.

## Summary of Design Considerations

Planning Division staff requests that the UDC review the development proposal and make findings and a recommendation based on the above-referenced standards, especially as it relates to the design considerations noted below.

- **Building Design and Materials.** The proposed exterior modifications result in significant changes to the general appearance and level of design of this particular tenant space, including the removal of architectural details and elements that add scale, texture, and articulation to the façade, as shown in the image at the right, which is of the existing tenant storefront.



The proposed changes also include introducing new materials (fiber cement) and increasing the use of existing (stucco).

While staff supports the addition of new storefront entry, staff has concerns with other modifications, which have been noted during pre-application discussions. One primary concern is the increase in the parapet wall height and decorative pilasters by approximately nine feet. While having some variation in height could be supported in order to enhance visual interest in the facade, staff is concerned about the resulting scale of such a large unarticulated EIFS/stucco field and how this element returns and ties into the balance of the existing roofline. Additionally, staff has concerns on how the extended fiber cement pilasters, with a simulated brick pattern, transition and relate to the existing brick base.

Staff notes that while signage is not currently before the Commission, the resulting changes create a larger unarticulated signable area, for signage that would be larger than what the Sign Code would permit. Any such request would require separate review and approval by the UDC.

Staff questions whether the proposed modifications result in an overall positive change in the existing building's overall design aesthetic. Staff requests the UDC review and make findings related to the overall building design and materials.

- **Landscape and Screening.** As noted in the application materials, landscape improvements are proposed. As such, consideration should be given to providing adequate year-round screening, color and texture. Staff requests UDC's review and findings on the proposed landscape plan and plant list.
- **Lighting.** The applicant is advised the if exterior lighting is proposed, including the removal and reuse of existing fixtures, a photometric plan and fixture cutsheets will be required.

**Large Retail Development Approval Standards**  
33.24(4) (f) MGO

1. Statement of Purpose. The purpose for this section is to provide a regulatory framework to ensure that large-format retail development promotes the efficient use of land and preserves and enhances the urban fabric through a more urban site and building design. In applying this ordinance to the redevelopment, expansion, or remodeling of existing sites, it is the intent of this ordinance to seek improvements, while recognizing that existing constraints will likely make full compliance with all provisions of this section difficult or infeasible.
2. Applicability. All new retail development that is on a single zoning lot and has a total floor area of forty thousand (40,000) square feet or more shall be subject to this ordinance total floor area shall be calculated by adding the floor area of all buildings on a zoning lot. When applying the requirements below, the Urban Design Commission, Plan Commission, and staff shall consider relevant design recommendations in any element of the City's Master Plan or other adopted City plans.
  - a. Any single retail business establishment that has a total floor area of forty-thousand (40,000) or more square feet shall be subject to Paragraphs 3. through 8. below.
  - b. All development on a single zoning lot shall be subject to Paragraphs 4. through 8. below.
  - c. The Plan Commission may waive one or more of the requirements in Par. 3. through 8. below, if it determines that unique or unusual circumstances warrant special consideration to achieve a superior design solution.
  - d. Proposals for additions, exterior building alterations, or site alterations to existing structures currently used for, or originally designed to accommodate, a retail development that has a floor area of forty thousand (40,000) or more square feet shall be approved pursuant to the applicable ordinances relating to the alteration of approved projects and shall comply with these requirements to the extent possible, given the constraints of the existing sites and structures.
  - e. Proposals for alterations to existing developments that currently exceed or are proposed to exceed a one hundred thousand (100,000) building footprint, as described in Par. 3, below, shall be approved pursuant to the applicable ordinances relating to the alteration of approved projects and shall comply with these requirements to the extent possible, given the constraints of the existing sites and structure.
3. Requirements for Buildings in Excess of 100,000 Square Feet. A single new retail business establishment may only exceed a building footprint of one hundred thousand (100,000) square feet as defined by the exterior walls, as provided below. Other separately-owned retail business establishments, entertainment, office, and residential uses not associated with the proposed business establishment shall not be counted towards the size of the building footprint.
  - a. The Plan Commission may consider a single retail establishment exceeding one hundred thousand (100,000) square feet if the design includes one or more of the following elements:
    - i. Multi-story development.
    - ii. Mixed use development.
    - iii. Structured or underground parking facilities.
4. Customer Entrances.
  - a. The side of a building that directly abuts the most traveled public or private right-of-way that provides vehicular and pedestrian access to the site shall feature at least one (1) customer entrance. The entry may utilize a pedestrian plaza, entry portico, or other community feature as described in Par. 8, below, between the building and sidewalk. Corner entrances may be considered to meet this requirement.
5. Site Design. A development must follow one of the following three (3) options adjacent to the street that is projected to have the most pedestrian activity associated with the building(s). The requirements may be met using any combination of buildings on the zoning lot. The site may be designed to utilize any combination of the three (3) setbacks, i. through iii., below. If a zoning lot directly abuts two (2) or more public or private rights-of-way, there are no requirements for additional street frontages.

- a. At least fifty percent (50%) of adjacent street frontage shall be occupied by building facades with a maximum setback of twenty (20) feet. This requirement may be met by using any combination of buildings on the zoning lot. No off street parking facilities shall be located between the façade(s) directly abutting the street and the adjacent street.
  - b. At least sixty percent (60%) if adjacent street frontage shall be occupied by building facades with a maximum setback of sixty-five (65) feet. This setback shall allow for a only a single drive aisle and one row of perpendicular parking with building entrance access and required landscaped buffer as stated in Par. 6.a., below. This setback may be extended to a maximum of seventy-five (75) feet, if traffic circulation, drainage and/or other site design issues are shown to require additional space.
  - c. At least seventy percent (70%) of adjacent street frontage shall be occupied by building facades with a maximum setback of eighty-five (85) feet. This setback shall allow for only a single drive aisle and two rows of perpendicular parking with building entrance access and required landscaped buffer as stated in Par. 6.a., below. This setback may be extended to a maximum of one hundred (100) feet, if traffic circulation, drainage and/or other site design issues are shown to require additional space.
6. Parking. The following requirements apply to the entire zoning lot.
- a. Off street parking facilities shall be located at least ten (10) feet from any property line and/or right-of-way and utilize a landscape buffer that includes trees, shrubs, decorative fencing, benches, flowerbeds, ground covers, or other high quality materials.
  - b. Transportation Demand Management. Any single retail business establishment of forty thousand (40,000) square feet or more with one hundred (100) or more full-time employees or full-time equivalents is required to have a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan, or participate in a Transportation Management Association (TMA), if one is available in the geographic area of the establishment. This requirement shall also apply to any such existing retail business establishment proposing an addition or alteration, and that will have one hundred (100) or more full-time employees or full-time equivalents.
    - i. The TDM Plan shall generally describe the applicant's intent with respect to reducing the number of single-occupant automobile trips and list the methods the applicant intends to use. These methods shall be based on the transportation choices available and indicate if the applicant will provide for either the full price to purchase a monthly bus pass from Madison Metro, or provide for three (3) or more of the following options to all employees: ridesharing/car pool matching; preferred parking for ridesharers; secured bicycle parking, showers and lockers; employee commuting subsidies or awards; emergency ride home program; employer-subsidized bus passes; provision of real-time transit information; or other options proposed by the employer to discourage the use of single-occupant vehicles, and as approved by the City.
    - ii. The employer shall make the provisions in its Plan available to all employees.
    - iii. The Plan shall describe the traffic/parking impacts of the development and shall provide specific details on the measures the employer will use to monitor the traffic/parking impacts.
    - iv. The Plan shall be periodically updated at intervals not to exceed every two years.
    - v. The Plan shall be reviewed by the Traffic Engineer in concert with the Planning Division Director. The Traffic Engineer shall provide comments and suggestions for how the Plan might be improved.
7. Pedestrian Circulation. The following requirements apply to the entire zoning lot.
- a. Sidewalks shall be provided along all sides of the site abutting a public or private right-of-way. Public sidewalks within the right-of-way may be used to meet this requirement.
  - b. Continuous internal pedestrian walkways at least six (6) feet in width shall be provided from the public sidewalk or right-of-way to the principal customer entrance of all buildings on the site. At a minimum, walkways shall connect focal points of pedestrian activity such as, but not limited to, transit stops, street crossings, building and store entry points. Walkways shall have adjoining landscaped areas along at least fifty percent (50%) of their length. These areas shall include trees, shrubs, benches, flowerbeds, ground covers, or other such materials.
  - c. Sidewalks at least eight (8) feet in width shall be provided along the full length of the building facade featuring a customer entrance, and along any façade abutting parking areas and shall provide at least

eight (8) feet in width clear from any merchandise, vending, or other obstructions. These sidewalks shall be located at least six (6) feet from the facade to provide planting beds for foundation landscaping, except where features such as arcades, entryways, or community features, as defined in Par. 8., below, are part of the facade.

- d. Internal pedestrian walkways provided in conformance with subparagraph b., above, shall have weather protection features, such as awnings or arcades within thirty (30) feet of all customer entrances and shall be constructed parallel to the façade of the building but need not extend into driving aisles or parking areas.
- e. All internal pedestrian walkways and crosswalks shall be distinguished from driving surfaces to enhance pedestrian safety and comfort, as well as the attractiveness of the walkways. Walkway materials shall be of durable, low-maintenance surface materials, such as pavers, bricks, or scored concrete. Signs shall be installed to designate pedestrian walkways.
- f. Sidewalks shall connect transit stops on or off-site as well as to nearby residential neighborhoods.

8. Central Features and Community Spaces. The following requirements apply to the entire zoning lot.

- a. At least one (1) of the following central features and community spaces shall be provided for each forty thousand (40,000) floor area of building on the zoning lot. A minimum of two (2) is required and each central features and community space shall each occupy a minimum of 400 square feet in area. (Am. by ORD-15-00033, 4-8-15)
  - i. Patio/seating area.
  - ii. Pedestrian plaza with benches.
  - iii. Transportation center.
  - iv. Window shopping walkway.
  - v. Outdoor playground area.
  - vi. Kiosk area.
  - vii. Water feature.
  - viii. Planter walls.
  - ix. Other deliberately shaped area and/or focal feature or amenity that adequately enhances the community and public spaces.
  - x. Outdoor employee amenities, such as a break area.
- b. All of the above, except outdoor employee amenities, shall have direct access to the public sidewalk network and shall not be constructed of materials that are inferior to the principal materials of the building and landscape.